

# FORGING THE FUTURE:



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## Friday FACTS

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"Leadership, Partnership, and Championship"

### Chronic diseases are more common, costly than once anticipated

Chronic diseases affect "far more" Americans than previously anticipated and threaten to overburden the nation's health care system unless measures to encourage preventive medicine are taken, according to two new studies. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University report that 125 million Americans have chronic diseases, exceeding a 105 million projection made in a 1996 landmark study, the Philadelphia Inquirer reports. Chronic illnesses, which range from cancer to allergies, have cost Americans \$510 billion this year in health care expenses. The Hopkins study, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, finds that average annual medical expenses for individuals with chronic illness total \$6,032, more than five times what a healthy person pays. The second study, conducted by the CDC, indicates that more than 70% of the nation's health care costs go toward treating chronic disease; in 1998, chronic illnesses killed 1.7 million Americans, or three-fourths of all deaths. Both studies report that the nation's health care system is not adequately prepared to handle the increase in chronic disease cases expected to occur as the baby boomers age. The Hopkins study estimates, that in 20 years, 157 million Americans will suffer from a chronic illness and health expenditures will reach the trillion-dollar mark. The principal investigator says the nation's health care system is geared towards "acute, one-time health problems"; physicians are not reimbursed for discussing a patient's multiple illnesses with other physicians and many payers won't cover long-term health care costs.

### Holiday Weight Gain

Research says that most people gain only 1-2 pounds over the holidays. How about taking the challenge now to lose 1-2 pounds before Christmas? That way you'll be ahead by January and not have to worry about weight gain. There are many ways to accomplish this. Pick something that is realistic for you. Increase exercise by walking during the lunch hour or whenever you can. Try using the stairs instead of the elevator, or try being more active instead of watching TV. Cut desserts, limit high fat /high calorie items, eat 5 to 10 fruits and vegetables a day, watch portion sizes, eat only when hungry, drink water instead of high calorie sodas or teas, limit high calorie alcoholic beverages. For added support, begin this simple challenge at your command.

The new "5 A Day Adventures" interactive CD-Rom, cookbook and chart, songs, and a live 5 A Day performance skit kit is available to teachers free of charge, by submitting a request on school letterhead with teacher's name, school address, and phone # to:  
Dole Food Company Nutrition and Health Program  
100 Hegenberger, Suite 100, Oakland CA 94621 or Fax to :  
510 639-5556



### NOTES....

The National Institute on Drug Abuse publishes a newsletter! The current edition-Volume 15, Number 5 focuses upon Nicotine Addiction. Articles on the latest NIDA research include updates, on the testing of a nicotine vaccine, on maternal smoking, on cravings and other areas. Consider obtaining a copy of this issue from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (800)729-6686, e-mail: [info@health.org](mailto:info@health.org) or subscribing (free) to NIDA Notes at [nidanotes@masimax.com](mailto:nidanotes@masimax.com)

Don't try to stick to a rigid diet during the holidays. You'll just drive yourself and everyone around you crazy. You can still eat sensibly without depriving yourself of the joy and pleasure of holiday foods.

**"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great." - Mark Twain (1835-1910).**